

Baku Forum good platform to discuss issues facing world - UPDATE

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By Amina Nazarli

The Youth Event of the 7th UNAOC Global Forum kicked off in Baku on April 25, bringing together 150 young leaders from all around the world to exchange their visions and solutions for the world to live together in inclusive societies, Azertac reported.

UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, addressing the event, said The UNAOC 7th Global Forum is dedicated to “Living Together In Inclusive Societies” and attaches great importance to the role of youth in meeting the challenge of, and progress towards, building diverse, inclusive and peaceful societies.

“Youth and media are particularly key actors in moving forward to the goal of inclusive societies. And without you, we would not be able to achieve our objectives,” he said.

“In opening this event, we also highlight something we deeply believe in at the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations: the strength of young people and their ability to transform our world for the better. For the Alliance, inclusive societies cannot exist without the full participation of youth. The Youth Event is just one of many youth-focused activities and programming that we offer. These are built on the principle that young people are the primary agents of change – not just in the future – but in our present as well.”

He further said the Baku Forum is a good platform to discuss issues facing the world.

"We have gathered in Baku to share our views on current important issues of the world concern," he said. "The international community must live in peace. Encouraging of the dialogue must be our main goal."

He emphasized the youth is a catalyst for changes, adding that mainly these young people can better promote and encourage the intercultural dialogue.

Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser said: “Through our Fellowship program, we sponsor every year young people from the Middle East, Europe and North America to experience immersive visits in each other’s regions. This program enables participants to understand other cultures and traditions, to believe in the importance of living with the others and to encourage them to reject any type of violence. It empowers them to better fight xenophobia and the East-West divide as they go back to communities where they are emerging as leaders.”

“We also organize a video festival called Plural Plus, which celebrates young filmmakers who creatively address critical issues affecting our world. This youth video festival acts as an international platform that amplifies young people’s voices on migration, diversity and social inclusion.

Another important program of UNAOC is the Youth Solidarity Fund, which provides youth-led organizations with direct funding to implement outstanding projects promoting intercultural and interfaith dialogue. This year, we funded projects in Africa and the Middle East, in areas affected by tensions, conflicts and violent extremism.”

“Established in 2008, the Fund responded to calls for action made by youth-led organizations around the world on the importance of establishing funding mechanisms for youth. Today, the Fund is more relevant than ever: As the global

agenda increasingly speaks of youth's participation and contribution to peace, development and security, it is critical to support this participation and contribution through funding and partnership opportunities.”

“It's an important year for the United Nations and the whole international community. We just adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a particular focus on youth, and set new goals for the World. For the first time in History, the Security Council Resolution recognizes the significant role that young people play in adapting to today's global challenges, including those to peace and security. And with the signature of the Paris agreement last Friday, we made quite an important progress towards securing the continued abundance of the resources of the planet for present and future generations.”

“These frameworks are all on today's agenda. As a community, we have to make sure that we empower young people and that they are part of the ongoing process of changing the world.”

“At the Alliance of Civilizations, we know from our experience of supporting youth-led initiatives and grassroots programs that peaceful and inclusive societies cannot be sustainable built without the participation and commitment of young people. This is why we have decided, once again, to include you, young people, into the Forum discussions as key stakeholders. You have been asked to develop Narratives of Tomorrow, in order to brainstorm and reflect on the Forum themes. I look forward to coming back later today to see how your narratives have been shaped and how they will bring new perspectives to the Forum discussions,” the United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations added.

Vice-President of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, Goodwill Ambassador of UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Leyla Aliyeva expressed her confidence that the Baku Forum would play a vital role in encouraging mutual understanding and cooperation on a global scale.

She highlighted cultural legacy and tolerance in Azerbaijan. Leyla Aliyeva noted the importance of building close cooperation between FAO and UNAOC in order to address the problem of ensuring global food security.

She also drew the audience's attention to the activities of International Dialogue for Environmental Action, IDEA, campaign. Initiated by Leyla Aliyeva, the campaign is

meant to unite the global youth with the aim of awareness raising in the field of environmental protection. The campaign accredited to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and granted an observer status within the organization.

Azerbaijani Youth and Sports Minister Azad Rahimov provided an insight into the country's youth policy. He said Azerbaijan's second largest city, Ganja, was announced the European Youth Capital for 2016. The Minister also highlighted the activities of the Youth Foundation under the President of Azerbaijan. He said that the meeting of intelligent young people from around the world in Baku is very important in term of resolving issues facing the world today.

The minister said that Azerbaijan takes significant measures for the young people, adding that the country supports initiatives towards raising the role of youth in the international arena.

The Youth Event is conceived as a preparatory event of the 7th UNAOC Global Forum and as such supports the selected young leaders to meaningfully participate in the Forum and to bring youth voices to the Forum discussions. During the Event participants will be able to engage with UNAOC on the relevance of its activities for young people, and to support youth participants' access to and knowledge of the global youth movement for peace and its network.

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